

La Vigna

Vol 1 (1984)

COLUMBUS DAY ISSUE

OCTOBER 1984



Photo: Corinne Bilancio

HOLLYWOOD IS LOOKING FOR THIS MAN

Alphonse Bilancio has been making news lately! His perfect 3 lb. 1 oz. tomato won 1st prize in a Mercer County weigh-in, and the Mayor of Trenton recently presented him with an award for the best vegetable garden in Trenton.

See pg.5 for more news on Uncle Al.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Mark your calendar: Please come to the LaVigna organizational meeting on Sunday, October 28, 2 pm at 90 Eggerts Crossing Road, Lawrenceville. If you have any questions about the meeting or need directions, call Angelica Roberts 883-6759 or Clothilda Montague and Dean Acquaviva 393-4316.

ANECDOTES:

Art Bilancio Remembers

Not one day of English school. From Casandrino to Trenton NJ 1930 I came from Italy very young, age 17, 26 of May 1930. When I got off the train in Trenton and I saw the railroad station...what a rusty building! Must be factories near by. In Trenton I lived until last year. The 1930's were the great depression years. The few words in English that I use today I learned by myself. I started when I was in Italy, and I am still learning a word here and there today. I am going to tell you my name, Antimo A. Bilancio. In 1936 I started to work for a painting contractor, Frank A. Mayer, 2257 Liberty Street, Trenton NJ. He could not say my name or what ever so he asked me if he could change my name. Smiling he said, "Can I call you Art?" From then on, my first name was Art. I worked for Frank for seven years, then joined the painters union,

(Continued on page 2)

FRAN BILANCIO BACK ON BOARDS

Staff writer Fran Bilancio is back on stage at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton NJ. He will appear as the character Enrique, who is secretly married to the late Angelique, in the Moliere comedy **The School for Wives**.

The play runs from October 3 to October 21. Call the McCarter Theatre box office for details and reservations.

TOSCA OPENS FLOWER SHOP

By Angelica Roberts

There is still a florist business in the family. Those of you who remember the Greenwood Florists, run by the Ottilio (Art) Bilancio family in Trenton, will be happy to know a fresh shoot has sprung up in Kingston-Toscana Bilancio has opened her own shop.

The Kingston Flower Company is the realization of Tosca's lifelong dream. "This is my calling in life--flowers," she said in an interview for a recent Princeton Packet article.

The 28-year old entrepreneur grew up with flowers, as did her sister Clelia, and brothers Verdi and Archimedes. (Archie recently sold Greenwood Florists, which he had bought from his father.) Her mother Anne was from Germany, and her European style of floral arrangement has contributed to Tosca's own unique style.

The Kingston Flower Company specializes in floral arrangements for weddings and funerals, and is located three miles north of Princeton on Route 27 across from Tin Lizzie's. The phone number is 924-8682.

Photo: Paul Savage, Princeton Packet



ANECDOTES: Continued

couple of years later I was told to go in the army. I was sent to Fort Dix, 21 days there. Not to do very ugly labor work, I volunteered to paint. At Fort Dix I was in reception center. My officer or captain of my company was Cpt. Samuel B. Berrent. He was very conscientious and very dedicated to his work. He was so busy he ran, not walked, from place to place. The 4th day in the army I asked Cpt. Berrent to show him a few things around the area, buildings that were not painted. Fort Dix was built in a hurry when United States got in the war with Germany. In the rush of the building, few of these things and places were painted.

The captain liked me and my work very much. The chimney over the barrack was rusty and not painted. One small wooden window in another barrack, the edges of outside doors were not painted, etc., etc.. "These things should be painted," I said to the captain. "Soldier," he said, "how long have you been in the army?" "This is my first day," I said. "Well," he said, "you have a lot to learn. That one is a different company, the other is a different company. All you showed me are 3 different companies." I replied, "Cpt. Berrent, all those buildings are my property; if I do not paint them, no one will." First he said, "You were not born to be a soldier, you were born to be an officer."

I am sorry that I have to leave you for now. I retired 8 years ago and I am still working. I must go. If you have patience to wait and give permission to do my work now, I will continue in the next Vigna issue.

Aufwiedersehn, arrivederci. I will see you in my thoughts again. Regards to all **LaVigna** readers and editors, relatives and friends. My cousin Frances and husband (cerrias) and the rest of the boys.

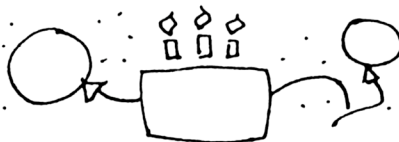
P.S. I am sorry that Louis from Eggerts Crossing Road can not read this, he told me few years ago that I should write these anecdotes.

AL BILANCIO HONORED THREE TIMES

Uncle Al's award-filled summer began when he was honored on June 1 by the Central Jersey chapter of the American Italian Historical Association at their fifth anniversary dinner at Roman Hall, Trenton. Uncle Al was honored as a founding member as well as "the one who has been on this earth longer than any other member." Bob Immordino, husband of Jennie Bilancio Immordino, is the president of the chapter. This honor was a complete surprise to Uncle Al, but he rose to the occasion, as always, with an eloquent thank-you speech.

(See page 5--related story)

REMEMBER TO WRITE TO LA VIGNA

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

Jane Bilancio Darpinian	Aug. 19
Terry Bilancio	Sept. 1
Bobby Candelori	Sept. 1
Paul Slaninka	Sept. 2
Nick Armenti	Sept. 3
John Anthony	Sept. 5
Erminia Martine	Sept. 6
Bob Chianese (Leo's son)	Sept. 14
Christina Candelori	Sept. 22
Lee Esposito	Sept. 24
Grace Mazzatelli	Sept. 24
Dennis Chianese	Sept. 26
Lilia Chianese	Oct. 2
Katherine Chianese	Oct. 3
Ray Armenti	Oct. 10
Susan Picascia	Oct. 15
Mickey Chianese	Oct. 19
Bruce Josephson	Oct. 25
Angelica Roberts	Oct. 27
Tim Montague	Oct. 29
Bernice Smailer	Oct. 30
Rose Bilancio	Oct. 31
Maria Armenti	Nov. 1
Gayle Armenti	Nov. 3
Beatrice Johnson	Nov. 13
Dean Acquaviva	Nov. 15
Sue Garzio	Nov. 19
Maria Pedata	Nov. 21
Ron Armenti	Nov. 22
Irma Candelori	Nov. 24
Carrie MacLeod	Nov. 30

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!**

Irma and Bob Candelori	Sept. 9
Frank and Sue Garzio	Sept. 30
Pam and Joe Chianese	Oct. 3
Mary Lynn and Dan Nazzaro	Oct. 29

Jane Bilancio Darpinian (daughter of Leo and Dorothy Bilancio) and David Vaun Darpinian, **Happy First Anniversary!** Aug. 1

IVAN BILANCIO WED

Ivan Bilancio, son of Leo and Dorothy Bilancio, married Carey Michaels on August 19 aboard the Queen Mary cruiseship in Los Angeles. Ivan and Carey live in Los Angeles, where Ivan moved several years ago from his family home in Atlanta, Georgia. Although most family members could not be there, we all send them our best wishes and we hope to see them soon. Congratulations and our love to you, Ivan and Carey.

NOTES FROM THE GARDEN

By Fran Bilancio

Through the Looking Glass

Always a source of curiosity and pleasure for me at my Grandpop Joe's garden was the well. Covered with a wood-slatted grate, it was about three feet wide with an interior red brick wall (no mortar) capped with cement so it rose seven inches above ground level.

Whether for putting out the fire at the end of a cold day or for watering radishes and tomatoes at the start of a hot day, it was always my job to fetch the water. The tool for this was an eight quart galvanized watering pail with a five foot wooden pole lashed to its handle.

"Frankie," he would say. "It no rain againna today. Da plants, dey awanna drink."

I would carefully push back the fragile old wooden grate, kneel on the cement brim, and examine my own clear image and that of the puffy white clouds drifting through the crystal blue heavens above, magically reflected in the well's waters.

"How lucky I am," I would think, "to be able to perform such a universal, such a humanly eternal act; to see in these still waters, in my Grandpop's well, such pictures created at this intersection of light, water, and..."

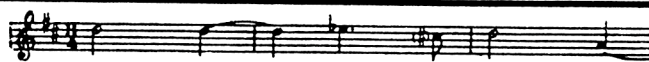
"Frankie," my Grandpop would call. "You taka too much time."

"...and time, Grandpop. Time," I'd say to myself.

I'd reach across to the opposite side of the well, lay my left hand on its brim, grab the pole, and drop the bucket down the shaft, careful not to tumble head first into this looking glass world my Grandfather built.

LaVigna thanks the following people for their donations:

- Jane and Pasquale Chianese
- Donation in memory of Matilda Bertolone
- McGahen, Young, Dempsey & Casey
- Mary Lynn and Dan Nazzaro



NOTES FROM THE STAFF

"IF 'A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS', A XEROX COPY MUST ONLY BE WORTH FIVE HUNDRED"

By Dean Acquaviva

The aim of this article is to educate our readers to the best methods of sending photographic images to **LaVigna** and of the problems and benefits of various types of image reproduction. The enjoyment of seeing your pictures in the highest quality print is all we are seeking.

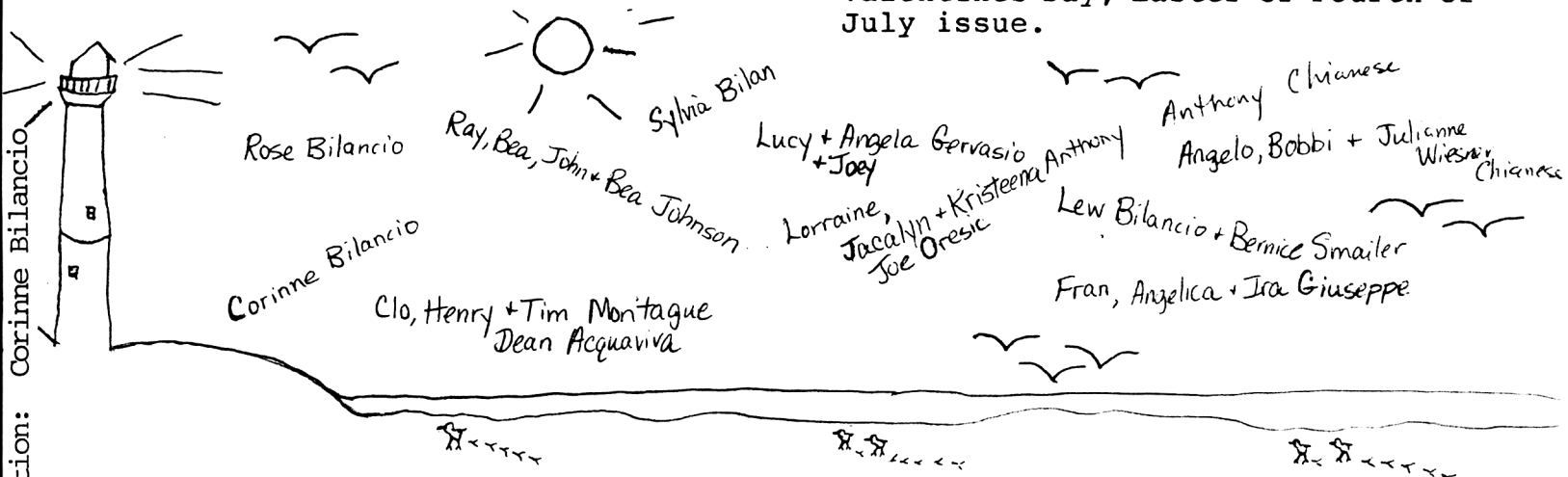
Technically a photo is made of continuous tone (grays) produced by the grain of the film. Xerox (and most conventional printing) can only reproduce black (pigment) and white (paper). With each successive xeroxing, an image suffers both from dropout (light grays turn white) and bleed (dark grays and shadow turn black).

Our publication is produced by xerox process. So that represents at least one reproduction of any image submitted; any further xeroxing makes an image suffer more. So here is the order of preference for material submitted: 1) A good quality original or duplicate photograph which we may keep. 2) An original newspaper or velox clipping--please fold and handle as little as possible. 3) Xerox copy of newspaper or photo.

When mailing any image to **LaVigna** make sure to handle it as little as possible keeping fingers off glossy surfaces. Never fold any photo or xerox and mark envelope "PHOTOS, DO NOT BEND". If at all possible, for fragile, rare or irreplaceable photos, sandwich them between thin cardboard or heavy stock paper to reduce chance of damage in shipment. Hope to see you in **LaVigna**.

MISSING ISSUES?

Yes, we can supply back issues if you have missed some. Since we're still "finding" people, our address list hasn't been all-inclusive. Let **LaVigna** know if you need the Valentines Day, Easter or Fourth of July issue.



Quite a few family members were found among the seagulls and sandpipers at North Beach Haven during the week of August 4. Three apartments were rented out to house everyone, and all the folks gathered together for dinner each night. The warm ocean, sunny beach and family fellowship were enjoyed by all.

EDITORS NOTE

As the leaves start to fall, our grape vine once again creeps its way into your mailbox. We hope that you all had an enjoyable summer and wish you the best of luck in your autumn endeavors, since the fall is so often a season of beginnings of one kind or another.

Our autumn endeavor is to get to know each other better. For this reason we have included a questionnaire with this **LaVigna**. Please fill it out as completely as you can or wish to and send it back.

We also want to meet more of you and give everyone the opportunity to participate in **LaVigna**, so we invite you to attend our next **LaVigna** meeting on Sunday, October 28, 2 p.m. at 90 Eggerts Road, Lawrence Township, Trenton, NJ. Don't even think for a moment what talents you do or do not have--if you wish to join us, your participation will be warmly valued and truly valuable. If you cannot join us in person, notes or phone calls with suggestions and family news are happily received.

Affettuosamente, *Corinne Bilancio*

Feel free to call: Corinne Bilancio (609) 881-0911 (Glassboro) or Dean Acquaviva or Clothilda Bilancio Montague (609) 393-4313 (Trenton).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I think **LaVigna** is a great idea. I know it takes lots of work. You have obviously undertaken a labor of love, or else it wouldn't get done. I hope you have good help and can sustain your enthusiasm.

One feature that might stimulate future interest and continued support is a family tree search. I have been trying to piece together the connections between the Chianese family in Trenton alone and I can't get beyond our own immediate group.

You might ask people to volunteer their information about our roots. It could then be compiled and perhaps fitted together and published in one grand issue of **LaVigna**.

Bob Chianese
Ventura, California

Editor's note: We think that the idea of a family tree is a great one. We know of other family members who have compiled family trees and we would like to print some eventually in **LaVigna**, perhaps "branch by branch". We suggest to all readers that you look into this and we invite you to send us your family tree.

Also, perhaps some of you can help Bob connect all of the Chianeses together. His parents' names are Dominick and Elsa Chianese with paternal aunts and uncles named Vincent, August, Nellie, Mary and Joe and grandfather Luigi (nicknamed "Barachian"). Do any of you Chianeses know how you are related to Bob and his parents? If so, let **LaVigna** know.

FAMILY MAXIMS

Lucy Gervasio remembers:

"Chi tene mamma che chiagne,
Chi nun tene mamma che nun chiagne."

"He who has a mother may cry,
But he who has no mother better not cry."

MATILDA BERTOLONE

By Lewis Bilancio

Mrs. Matilda Bertolone, of 324 Elmer St., Trenton, NJ, died on Aug. 4, 1984, following a heart attack. Matilda was a sister of Angelina (wife of Antonio Chianese) and of Assunta (who married Angelo Chianese).

Matilda was one of five daughters born to Pasquale D'Angelo and Carmella Camisa in Casandrino, Italy. She, the youngest, was born on Aug. 29, 1895, and came to America when she was 20 years old. The crossing was difficult. There was a bad storm, and the passengers were sick as well as mortally afraid. Matilda vowed to throw her gold into the sea if she survived. She did and she did.

Shortly after arriving in Trenton she married Mariano Bertolone, who died a few years later of cancer, much mourned, for he was admired by everyone. Subsequently Mariano's brother, Vito, arrived from Sicily and married Matilda.

Matilda is survived by two children: Concetta (Connie) Picascia, who is living in California, and Marianna Mazzatelli, who still lives at the Trenton homestead.

Matilda is buried in St. Mary's Cemetery beside her sister, Assunta.

Staff & Writers this Issue

Corinne Bilancio Dean Acquaviva
Lorraine Anthony Francis Bilancio
Angelica Roberts Lewis Bilancio
Angelo Chianese Lucy Gervasio
Ottilio (Art) Bilancio

EXTEND YOUR FAMILY

UNCLE AL CELEBRATES BIRTHDAY

Family members gathered at the home of Alphonse and Jennie Bilancio on August 2nd to surprise Uncle Al with a party for his 91st birthday, which was held in his award-winning garden. He was surprised--by cake, ballons, Asti Spumante and the following speech by his great-nephew Francis.

Great Uncle Al, Momma, uncles, aunts, sisters, nephews, cousins, ladies and gentlemen, godfather :

It is not without great pleasure and pride that I address you tonight on this great occasion--recognizing the 91st birthday of our uncle Alphonse Bilancio. The important thing is hardly that our uncle has lived long, as any calendar will testify, but that he has lived well.

In a world where so many search for greatness and role models in the press, on TV, in literature or history books, we are most fortunate to have such a one in our Uncle Al.

He has offered his fine example to not less than 4 generations, as we see here tonight.

Not a day goes by that we are not affected by our Uncle Al's lifetime of deeds and accomplishments.

Since coming from his native land he has always fought for justice in this his adopted country. 1) Justice for women that they may vote. 2) Justice for the workers, that they may organize and share in this great country's wealth. 3) Justice for all Americans, as I witnessed him marching in Washington, D.C., for an end to the Viet Nam War. 4) Justice for the Italians that they may stand tall, with pride, dignity and respect with all other peoples of America and the world.

To take a stand for these things, my good relatives and friends, is and was seldom popular and often dangerous. Freedoms and rights and comforts which each of us enjoys every day are a direct result of our Uncle Al's lifetime commitment to Justice and his being the champion of the "little guy"!

Not only active in civic affairs, Uncle Al has always found time to visit with ailing friends and family. Always giving them an ear to talk or cry to, Uncle Al would nurse them back to good spirits with lifegiving laughter--offering at least a temporary respite from their worldly woes.

And for that matter, who of us here has not enjoyed and learned from his keen wit and fantastic stories. And what a garden!! We can all witness that here and now.

These things are just the tip of this great iceberg of a man. I am young. It will be years and years before I can fully appreciate who this man is and what he has done.

Justice, humor, and life affirmation. These are the things I connect to my Uncle Al. Let us all learn from him, and seek inspiration in his life example.

He is our treasure, our wealth. Uncle Al, we love you.

Finally, unlike that great American, Abraham Washington, who used to say, "Give me liberty or give me death," I say, "Give me my Uncle Al!"

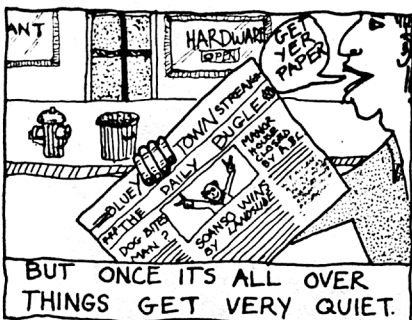
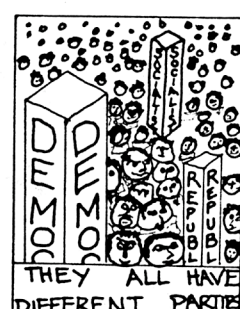
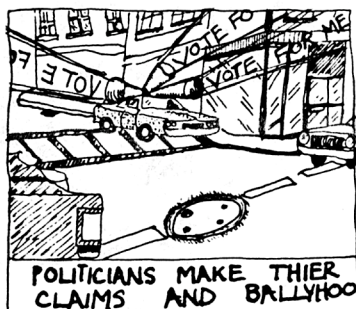
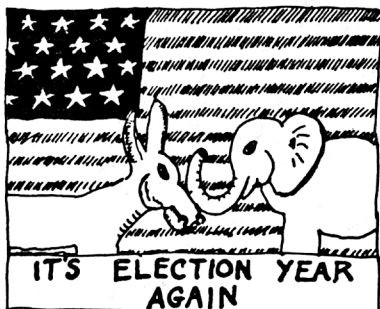
Uncle Al, a very happy 91st birthday!

Uncle Al commented after the speech "Thank you for stealing my material! But you're my nephew--you can have it all."

Uncle Al's toast to the family was the motto of the Three Musketeers: "All for one and one for all!"

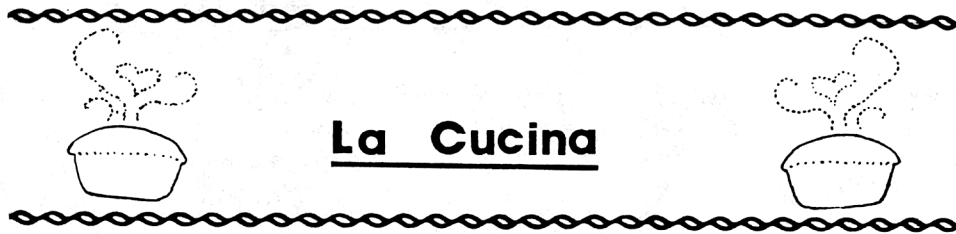
Ever have an urge to cartoon? Send in any ideas for cartoons to be illustrated or your own finished drawing to be a guest cartoonist for **Vignette**.

THE FOUR YEAR ITCH



VIGNETTES

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GREEN TOMATO PIE

Here it is October again! Time to pick all your tomatoes before that first heavy frost.

And, here's one thing you can do with a lot of those green tomatoes. It's Fran's green tomato pie. Delicious, nutritious and fast!

1. Buy or make enough dough for 1, 2 or 3 pizzas. I just drop a few cups of whole Wheat flour (any kind is fine) on the table, make a hollow, pour in some warm water, dissolve 1 or 2 packages of yeast in water, throw in a little salt, pour in some oil (1-2 tablespoons), then mix and knead for maybe 11 minutes total.
2. Spread dough on oiled pizza pan(s), or cookie sheet(s), or iron frying pan. When you're making fast pizza, that dough doesn't have to rise even once.
3. Slice on green tomatoes about 1/4" thick.
4. Season to taste. I use lots of garlic, olive oil, pepper, oregano and basil.
5. Optional--Add your favorite cheese to melt on top about 12 minutes before pizza is done.
6. Bake at 375° Cook for 30-45 minutes

Eat it hot...or eat it cold. Ummm, so good!

"La Cucina", "The Kitchen", is always looking for family recipes. Maybe you have a tasty Christmas dish to share with us. Send it to **LaVigna** before Nov. 24th.

NEXT LA VIGNA ISSUE

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Send your Christmas news and closeup photos to: **LaVigna**
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PLACE
STAMP
HERE



Happy Columbus Day